

12 POWERFUL “SEARCH” TIPS WHEN SEARCHING FOR ANCESTRY AT FAMILYSEARCH FamilySearch International

The ‘search’ features and filters in the FamilySearch search engine now provide researchers with unprecedented, powerful functionality for running their “searches”. To the novice or the professional researcher, the current system upgrades now make the FamilySearch search engine one of the most powerful, functional ones on the world wide

web. Users/researchers may now customize their own “search” parameters in order to maximize their chances of finding correct data. *Rarely* do family history search engines allow the capability in the filtering techniques now available in the FamilySearch.org’s “search” engine!

In the old version of FamilySearch, the limited functionality in its “search” engine prevented many from being able to obtain data they were searching for. You simply could not perform or set the kind of “search” parameters necessary to successfully obtain or glean vital data!

Here are 12 important “search” tips available to users which help you

obtain more success using the FamilySearch system. Each tip is a feature and/or filter which can be important in making your search experience effective and more successful. Note: Not *all* of these “search” tips and features presented here, are mentioned in the FamilySearch.org “Help” tutorials (but should be).

The twelve tips (key features of which there may yet be more than these) are worthy of dissemination and sharing as they will help more users/researchers have more successful “search” experiences. These tips apply not just with conducting England searches, but for most countries with extensive data in the FamilySearch system.

Twelve “Search” Tips

The current FamilySearch search engine now allows users to--

1. **Search given-names only:** You may search a specific or very localized area, and/or by date-range (even with no surname) if desired, or by a unique first name. Great for 1) performing a marriage search when the surname of a spouse isn’t known at all; 2) when you don’t find an ancestor by spelling variants; this feature also is crucial for 3) effective searches i.e. in all patronymic countries, such as in Scandinavian, Icelandic, Welsh, Southern (United States), and in Jewish research, etc. For example: Try searching for “Elidad Davis” born in London 1611. Then try searching just under the given-name only—“Elidad”. Note: Of 2-3 London entries, one is “Elidad Dausi”[sic]. (For this time period, the letters “u” and “v” are used interchangeably.) It should have been indexed under and/or as the surname “Davis” but indexers typed it true to the way it appears.

2. **Search by surname only.** Our system now allows such searches, which is great for performing 1) a marriage search when the given-name of a spouse isn't known at all or if the given name used is not known *precisely*, i.e. Mary vs Mary Ann or Marian[n]e, Marie or Maria, etc.; or 2) when you're researching a person with 2-3 or more given names. Search by surname, with locality and with the time frame.
3. **Search by Place only—for a birth, marriage or burial/death—i.e. in a smaller town, or parish or chapel.** Did you know that you can merely type in the place name (correctly!); if you wish, then a year or range of years, i.e. "1833-1835"; then the county or township name. For example, try typing, "Brierley Hill, Staffordshire, England"—without typing the given name and surname. *The system now provides users the ability to bring up ALL entries—from places in census, parish registers transcripts, etc., pertaining to a specific place-name/parish, and for any range of years!* This is terrific for locating poorly or otherwise variantly spelled ancestral names. If you want, you can even filter down the results by a specific record type, by clicking "Collections" in the left-hand margin and then click "Birth and baptisms", or "Marriages", etc.—to exclude any indexed entries from other records, such as Census.
4. **"Wildcard" searches ("?" = one character; "*" = infinity characters):**
You may now search using a wildcard(*). For example, type: "Sm*th", then type in a specific locale, i.e. "St Paul Cathedral, London" for the year 1625. FamilySearch will return "Smeth", Smeath, along with "Smith" and even "Smythe". Note: To use a wildcard symbol when running a search, you may now use just one letter of the surname or given name, i.e. try a wild card, such as with "Q*" in the surname field, and type "Cheshire" in the "Place" box.
5. **Search *multiple* Wildcards for finding difficult, variant-spelled surnames:** There are at least 117 ways to spell "Taylor" in the F.S. system. Imagine other surnames, i.e. **Thibou**—T[h][i/e]b[a/eau/ou etc., which may also be spelled over a hundred different ways. This however, becomes much less a problem to locate in the system using [a] wildcard character[s]. Users may now perform searches using multiple wild card characters (asterisk—"*" = multiple characters), up to at least four wildcard (asterisks) at a time for surnames or given names! For example, as the French surname **Thibou** can be spelled over a hundred variant ways, to capture as many possible spellings, try different variations, thus: **Th*b***, or, **T*b*u*** and etc. (See also no. 6 below).

This is a *great* way to locate as many possible spellings for difficult, variantly-spelled surnames, such as in cases of Polynesian (especially), old French, Native American, Polish, and other Slavic (especially) etc., surnames. Note: The search "results" or "hits" may now be filtered by specific locality, time period, gender, residence, record collection etc.

6. **Use a Wildcard[s] as substitute for a surname's prefix (or suffix):** You may use the wild card feature when you don't know or are unsure of the spelling of the prefix (the beginning of) a surname! Users can use the wildcard (*) in front of the surname; then merely type the last portion of the surname as it is known. For example, for the

surname of **Mac Donald**, etc., try typing—***Don*I*** [for cases where the **Mac** or **Mc** may've been dropped]; or if there's too many, try **M*Donald**. For **MacCaine**, try--***ca*n*** or more especially **M*Ca*ne** and even **M*Ain*** or **M*Ane**, etc. {work with it until you strike the right combination). As in the above surname of **Thibou**, type it thus: ***bou**. Or, conversely, place the wildcard at the end of the name—**Thi***; and try ***smith** for **Niesmith** or **Arrowsmith**.

7. **Parent/Spouse searches:** Use the Parent search to find all the children born to an ancestor or siblings of an ancestor—in the FamilySearch system). Just click “Parents”; four boxes appear so type in just the given and surname of the father; type no given names of any children at all. Then type in *only the given name of the wife/mother* (Note: typing the mother's maiden will negate the search—because most indexed entries from the parish registers don't provide it; the only exception to this rule is when searching the name of single mother—in cases of children born out of wedlock; see below): In pre-1660 searches, use the father's given and surname only; often mothers' given-names are not recorded in the baptism registers prior to 1650. By typing it in, it may negate your search!
Use the “Spouse” search to find the spouse to whom an ancestor was married by clicking “Spouse” and typing in the given name, leaving it blank when it's unknown.
8. **Determine the number of illegitimate children born to a single mother:** Run a search on just the mother's name—click “Parents”, then type her given and maiden surname in the “Mother” box (similar to no. 7 above) and, if desired, the name of a parish or township, or—in cases of a less common surname—the county name.
9. **Batch Number searches:** Back—by popular demand—“Batch Number” searches, while is now rendered irrelevant due to no. 3 above, and no. 11, below, the ‘old’ batch number “search” feature nevertheless has been restored. Now, you can view all names in a Batch by name, or *not* typing any name[s] or, run searches with wild card on any name, or perform a parent search, a spouse[s] search. Search results from this database are not included when using the main “search” engine at FamilySearch, so searches must be run separately.
10. **“Exact Match” only.** This little box, sits on the right-side of each given name, surname, place-name, parent and spouse name[s] boxes as well. Click to check-off this box only if you are certain of the spelling. Even *if* you believe you are certain of the correct spelling, use only with keen discretion and caution! If used prudently, it returns “hits” which are more accurate, clean and relevant to each search. Instead of returning i.e. 5,678 “hits”, most of which are irrelevant ‘fluff’ or otherwise unwanted “hits”, it will return to you only i.e. 17 “hits” or that is—only the truly relevant “hits”!
11. **Learn immediately if a Parish has been indexed in FamilySearch or not:** Similar to no. 3. Search to determine if a parish's registers of i.e. marriage or baptisms or burial data content is (indexed) and in FamilySearch's database[s]: Select the event type; type in the accurate spelling of the parish place—without typing anything else! (See the FS

Catalog for correct place-name spellings.) This search results in the system retrieving every single entry from an indexed/extracted township chapel or parish!

12. **Search names indexed from any Film Number.** Did you know that you may now call up data (names) found (indexed) from a whole microfilm roll within the FamilySearch system? In the “Search” engine, merely type the FHL film call number; the system will display *all* of the names found on the roll of microfilm!

Summary

You may now *customize* your searches in numerous ways to obtain the results you need! These new “search” features render the search engine as one of the most powerful available. The tools facilitate users’ success in retrieving the most correct data on ancestors found in the FamilySearch system. Moreover, these new “search” standards establish FamilySearch as a trendsetter with benchmark “search” capabilities! The customized “search” capabilities are almost second to none, and now reflect more accurate, specific, and relevant hits based on any combinations of these features. When used in connection with valid, sound [re-]search strategies, it makes for amazing “search” results nearly every time (where data exists within the FamilySearch database system).

Also note: Due to the on-going updating and upgrading of the (whole) FamilySearch system software, at times the search engine’s “results” may not always precisely mirror one or more of the “search” scenarios listed above.

Feedback

Send us your “feedback” with specific instructions to our program engineers so they can reconstruct a problem in order to correct the problem. Or, offer them your suggestion for enhancing some functionality within the FamilySearch system.

A Hand List of Online England County-wide Indexes

This short list provides the largest and most powerful 'finding' sources county by county which are currently available to England family history researchers—for online indexed or transcribed *CMBs (christenings, marriages and burials).

Here's a key to the best websites:

FS – FamilySearch.org

FMP - FindMyPast.co.uk

AC - Ancestry.co.uk

OPC – Lancashire, Sussex, Warwickshire, etc., "Online Parish Clerk"; Google to find

Joiner MI – Joiner Marriage Index; see at www.joiner-marriage-index.org.uk (\$)

FHS – Family History Society; Google to find website by county name

Soc. Gen. – Society of Genealogists, London; see at www.sog.org.uk (\$)

TheGenealogist – see at www.TheGenealogist.co.uk (\$)

FreeReg – see at www.FreeReg.org.uk

BMI - Boyd's Marriage Index

Here's a county by county listing of key websites holding significant databases for finding ancestry per above websites:

- **Bedfordshire:** FS – 1.2m or nearly 98% county coverage
- **Berkshire:** FS – has abt 1.2m or nearly 70% coverage; findmypast (FMP) has some
- **Buckinghamshire:** FS – has abt 4m or nearly 70% county coverage; Buckinghamshire county archive
- **Cambridgeshire:** Cambridgeshire FHS – CDS for 100% co. to 1900; CDs available also at FHL; FS has 76% coverage for co.; Freereg – 46% coverage; Boyds Marr Indx – 85%
- **Cheshire:** FS – 9m ~70% coverage; Cheshire Parish Reg. Project; Ancestry – 5m; FMP – 6.5m
- **Cornwall:** FS – 80% or 1.6m Cornwall OPC – 850+% or 1.9m; Boyds Marr. – 80%; Freereg – 85% (mostly marriages)
- **Cumberland:** FS – has 1.5m or abt 80+% county coverage
- **Derbyshire:** findmypast (FMP) – 5.3m 85% and FS – 4.2m 75%; Ancestry – 3.3m
- **Devonshire:** FMP – 6.5m and FS – 3.7m—nearly 50% coverage; FHL has most par. transcripts
- **Dorsetshire:** FS – 8.4m; FMP – 3.6m, & Ancestry.com – 7.7m;
- **Durham:** FS – has 80+% county coverage; findmypast (FMP) has some; durhamrecordsonline; Freereg – 74%
- **Essex:** FS - (2.4m) online; Ancestry – abt 2.2m entries; theGenealogist – 2.5m; FMP – 700k; also Essex Rec. Office (SEAX) online has images of PRs but no transcriptions;
- **Gloucestershire:** Ancestry.com – 10.2m; FS – 3.4m; Avon FHS CDs; Gloucestershire archives: <http://www3.gloucestershire.gov.uk/genealogy/Search.aspx>
- **Hampshire:** FS has 2.2m (part. pre-1750); 1.6m FMP; Hants Record Office marriage index (mostly complete); Freereg – abt 30% coverage; theGenealogist – 2.8m
- **Herefordshire:** FS – has over 80+% county coverage up to 1880; Bertram Merrell Marr. Index (on microfiche at FHL); Herefordshire FHS – marrs 1538-1957; burials- 1813-1839
- **Hertfordshire:** FS – has nearly 90% or 1.8m up to 1875; FMP – 1.8m
- **Huntingdonshire:** FS – 1.4m; FMP has 228k burials

- **Kent:** East Kent & West Kent FHS has CDs with abt 70% marrs. coverage; FMP – 1.5m; and FS 8.1 million
- **Lancashire:** FS 20m; Ancestry.com 9m; Lancashire OPC 8m; Freereg – 30%
- **Leicestershire:** Leicestersh. Fam. H. Soc.CDs - 70% cov; FS – 1.2m or 55%; FMP – 1.8m
- **Lincolnshire:** FS – 6.25m or abt 85+%; Freereg – 82% coverage; FMP – 4.5m
- **London [City of]:** FS abt 90+%; Ancestry.co.uk – abt same
- **Middlesex:** Ancestry.co.uk – 27.4+ million (~60+%, largest online; Westminster mostly excluded); plus Pallots Marriage Index – 1780-1837 (80%); Docklands ancestors – abt 1m entries for Greater London's East-end parishes of Middlesex; FS – 5 million entries; Westminster only--FS - 1.8m; FMP 3.4m for Westminster.
- **Monmouthshire:** FMP – ~1m; FS – 5.1m;
- **Norfolk:** FreeReg.org.uk - nearly 75% county coverage; FS – 4.3m; FMP – 4.3m; thegenealogist – 3.6m, completing rest of county by 2017; Ancestry – 8.5m; Genealogy.doun.org has abt 300k PR/BTs entries; Tinstaafl
- **Northamptonshire:** Northamptonshire R.O. has marriage index; Northhants FHS published BMB indexes on CDs - see at www.familyhistorynorthants.co.uk; Ancestry – 7.6m; Freereg – 71% coverage; FS – FHL has CDs
- **Northumberland:** FS – 2.9m or 85+% coverage; FMP – 2.3m; Joiner Marriage Index; Freereg – 80% coverage
- **Nottinghamshire:** FS – 1.8m or 75+% coverage; freereg - abt 95% coverage
- **Oxfordshire:** Ancestry – 4.3m; FS – abt 366k or ~15% coverage; Oxford FH Soc. (see their website) has numerous parishes transcription publications for sale
- **Rutlandshire:** LRFHS.org.uk has numerous CDs available; FS abt 50% coverage for county; FMP - ~900k
- **Shropshire:** FS – largest databases for county with 85+% coverage; FMP has some
- **Somerset:** FreeReg.org.uk – has nearly 85% county coverage; Ancestry 7m; FS - 30% or 2m
- **Staffordshire:** FS – 4.8m or 85+% coverage; FMP – 4.6m; Freereg – 65% - many burials
- **Suffolk:** Suffolk FHS CDs w/ abt 65% coverage (by deanery name); FS ~60+% (10m); Boyd's Marriage Index – 33% (avail. on FMP); FMP – 1m
- **Surrey:** FS – 3.7m or abt 70+% coverage; Ancestry – 3.8m; FMP has 500k
- **Sussex:** FS – 4.2+m coverage; Sussex OPC - many parishes completed; Michael Burchall index; Leeson Marriage Index; Burials - FMP
- **Warwickshire:** Ancestry – 5.1m; FS – 4.6m; FMP – 3.7m; Warwickshire OPC has indexed many parishes; Freereg – 56% coverage
- **Westmorland:** FS – largest databases for county with 70+% coverage or 1.2m
- **Wiltshire:** FS – 3m or nearly 50% coverage; Nimrod Marriage Index is complete; Freereg – 80% - mostly marriages; FMP - some
- **Worcestershire:** FS – nearly 75% coverage or 2.5m; see Birmingham and Midland Society publications; theGenealogist – 2m+ entries
- **Yorkshire:** FS – 11.5m; FMP – 11.5m; Ancestry.co.uk – 11.8m PRs/5.8m BTs = 17.6m; Joiner Marriage Index – 2m+
- **Wales CMBs:** FS.org – 4.2m; FMP – 7+m (abt 65%; some Radnor)
- **Wiki.familysearch.org** – look under single parish name, or County's List of Parish's on County page. Scroll to "Church Records"; then click links to parish records online
- **British Navy/Royal Marines:** FMP 1m
- **British Army and nationals' BMDs abroad 1730-1969:** Ancestry – 437,000
- **British Consulate BMBs 1810-1968:** Ancestry – 21,000
- **British Army Pensions:** FMP has several W.O. pension records indexed; TNA
- **British BMDs (births, deaths & marriages) at sea 1844-1890:** 437,000 at Ancestry
- **British India BMDs 1647-1948 –** FMP – 2.5m
- **British Merchant Seamen 1835-1857:** FMP – 1.9m

- **Nonconformist/nonparochial registers:** FS – several million entries; thegenealogist.co.uk; bmdregisters.co.uk
- **Old Bailey Quarter Sessions (Greater London, S. England) & Accounts 1674-1913** – 1.2 m
- **Quakers:** FMP 1.3m; FS – has indexed most of its large collection of Quaker registers

Miscellaneous “Tips” to Find Ancestors online at FamilySearch.org

- FamilySearch.org – is now indexing burials and many are now online for numerous counties
- FamilySearch.org – is now indexing in most England counties, generally; if your county is NOT listed in the “Browse all published collections” on the FS “Search” engine page, then instead, search under the name of county by typing it in; or search at the parish level (spelt correctly).
- Probate records: most counties have county-wide indexes available online; Google under 1) county name, with the search terms “index” and “probate” (or “will”); or better, use Wiki.familysearch.org and click on “England/[name of]County/Probate”; follow steps
- “Google” the following search terms: 1) [name of] county 2) “Indexes” & 3) i.e. “Baptisms”
- www.parishregisters.com (\$)– a.k.a. East Dockland (London) Ancestors or view at FMP

The Church of England parish registers are indexed to approximately 65-70 percent completion—for the whole country by FamilySearch.org. They are as follows:

- Bedfordshire – 90%+
- Berkshire – 75%
- Buckinghamshire – 72%
- Cambridgeshire – 76%
- Cheshire – 80+%
- Cornwall – 80+%
- Cumberland – 90+%
- Derbyshire – 85+%
- Durham – 80+%
- Gloucestershire – 80+%
- Herefordshire – 85+%
- Hertfordshire – 90+%
- Kent – 70+%
- Lancashire – 75+%
- Leicestershire – 75%
- Lincolnshire – 90+%
- London City (County) – 90+%
- Middlesex (London) – 55%
- Northumberland 90+%
- Nottinghamshire – 80+%
- Shropshire – 90+%
- Staffordshire – 85+%
- Surrey – 75+%
- Sussex – 75%
- Yorkshire – 80%